

Depot Town Rag

September 1989

Life after Festival

1860-1869

YPSI-CONA

Mean Bean expands

Train Trips

Heritage 2020!

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Heritage Fest showcases our best traditions

Miss Evangline Lewis used to say, "Ypsilanti was elegant . . . but never stuffy," and that's the tradition many of the events of the annual Heritage Festival seem to bear out. Sure, there is an element of carny-life in some of the program, but the tradition of hosting out-of-towners for a weekend's visit in Our Town lives on.

Guides on board the ARTRAIN, historic home tours, colorful old-time costumes on the street, concerts in the parks, and beautifully restored vehicles in the Heritage Parade bring back a taste of warmth and elegance that seems to best be found in the older neighborhoods.

Depot Town, along with many other commercial and residential districts, seeks to foster and encourage that spirit all year 'round. Page four of this issue highlights several active groups in the block which are always open to the involvement of new folks.

The good old days are still here and many people are abandoning their television sets and hanging out in the streets and on the sidewalks with their neighbors. Depot Town is another of those old communities where it still works.

Early publication

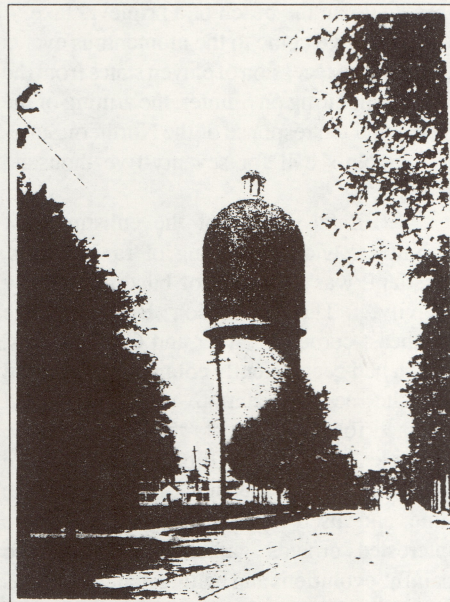
The September issue of

The Depot Town Rag

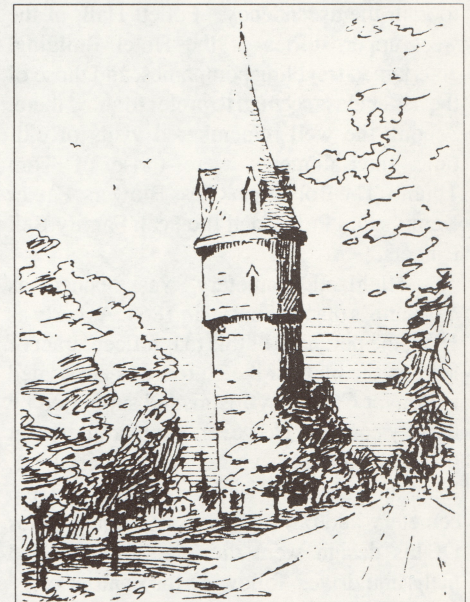
will be distributed during the last hours of the 1989 Ypsilanti Heritage Festival to remind our guests that we carry on like this down here all year 'round.

For just ten bucks a year, you can get this constant district promotion sent to your home address. See inside for information on Associate membership. . . .

Captions courageous, from a 76-year-old study:



"Water Tower from Cross Street looking west-ward, showing ill-proportioned dome."



"Sketch showing possible treatment for the top of the Water Tower."

Ypsilanti Water Tower design questioned by leading landscape architect, F.L. Olmstead, in 1913

Far be it from anyone to challenge the good taste and design of the City's most prominent architectural feature on the occasion of its Centennial celebration, but now that the 100th anniversary is over, local boosters may wish to see what America's best-known landscape architect had to say about that feature. On December 31, 1913, the famous Olmstead Brothers, Landscape Architects out of Brookline, Mass., were commissioned to study the City of Ypsilanti. They were the firm of Frederick Law Olmstead, known for such works as New York's Central Park, Detroit's Belle Isle, and Vanderbilt's Biltmore Gardens surrounding the largest single family house in the U.S.A.

In their study of Ypsilanti, they recommend extensive conservation efforts be taken to preserve public green areas. Frog Island and Riverside Park were two of those dreams which eventually happened.

The following paragraph is taken from page 89 of "Ypsilanti, Michigan. Report Upon Proposed Improvements, Forming a Basis for a General City Plan." More excerpts will follow in subsequent issues.

"The water tower in Ypsilanti is an imposing shaft of stone but is now surmounted by an ill-proportioned wooden dome. It would be somewhat difficult to make this a well-proportioned feature, as at best the column must be too short for so tall a top structure; but it would be possible, by removing the extra platform beneath the drum, by corbeling out under the drum, and by altering the form of the roof, to make a much more agreeable object of this prominent and dominating structure. The accompanying sketch suggests one possible treatment, but is intended as a suggestion only, for this is a matter worthy of careful study by an architect of the best artistic judgment."

So much for the testimony of experts.

1860-1869 : Follett Hall, Highland Cemetery, Civil War, the Thompson Block, Woodruff School

Excerpts from Colburn's The Story of Ypsilanti.

Published in 1923 for the Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the City, in Cooperation with the Committee on History composed of Carl E. Pray, Mrs. P.R. Cleary, and Miss Florence Shultes. More excerpts will follow in the September and October Rags.

... The Follett House was the popular hotel of the period, the old Hawkins House being more of the type of the country tavern. The East Side had long retained a business supremacy and "Up Town" was just beginning to gain the ascendancy. Follett Hall, in the west upper stories of the Hotel Building, entertained traveling companies, and those of the better class seemed to prefer to show there. Among the well remembered visits of old-time entertainments were those of Tom Thumb, The Bohemian Glass Blowers, Father Kemp's Old Folks, and the Peak Family Bell Ringers.

Highland Cemetery was opened as Ypsilanti's place of burial in 1864. As early as 1858, the purchase of this magnificent tract of land on the bluff of the Huron was advocated by Mayor Chauncey Joslin, and supported by the city council. However, popular interest at that time did not warrant the undertaking. Later on, the land was purchased, and the cemetery laid out by Colonel Glenn of Niles. Of his design were the beautifully circled paths and drives, following the contour of

ridge and bluff and leading through groves of oak. To the original trees were eventually added cypress, willow, pine and cedar. As is the case in many cemeteries of Southeastern Michigan, Highland lies on a sand ridge thrown up on the beach of a primeval lake.

... Thus we come to the momentous events of 1861: the secession of eleven states from the Union; the firing on Sumter, the arming of the South and the response of the Northern States to Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand men...

... In the period of the enlistment of volunteers and the drilling of raw recruits, Ypsilanti was the scene of bustling military activity. The Thompson Block on the northeast corner of River and Cross Streets, which had been recently completed, was used for the accommodation of soldiers and retained for several years the name of "The Barracks." The site of Gilbert Park and of the Woodruff School was the "Commons" of the time and used as a drill ground. Here interested crowds gathered to watch the painful evolutions and halting manual of arms of the raw soldiers. **Next month: 1870-1879**

YPSI-CONA: Putting the UNITY back into our Community!

After a June organizational session, sixteen neighborhood groups in Ypsilanti have formed a Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (CONA)

- to bring together neighborhood groups for the purpose of networking their talents
- to provide technical problem solving experiences
- to foster interaction and support on common issues.

That first meeting saw the prioritizing of issues which ranged from crime prevention, drug activity and noise abatement to addressing problems of organizational techniques. City and County officials were in the audience for that first session and more were on the panel for the July meeting. YPD Captain, L.J. McKeown, City Attorney Monika Sacks, and Chief of Building Inspectors Larry Abernathy spoke to the more

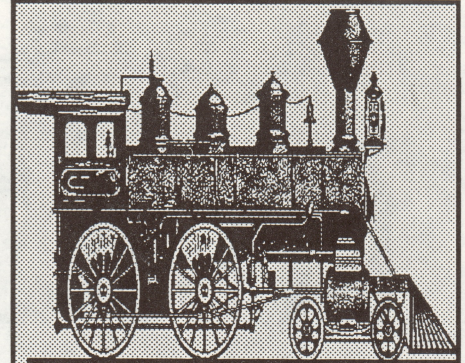
than thirty in attendance on what residents and block groups can do to help in crime prevention in their districts.

A September 12 (7:30 pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall), panel will focus on two issues: 1. Officializing your neighborhood group (Do you need to be incorporated or tax-exempt? How to make a constitution and bylaws? What's the difference?) and 2. neighborhood beautification efforts (What works? What doesn't? Who needs help?)

After only three months' activity, nearly every quarter of the City of Ypsilanti has sent delegates and many private individuals have also shown concern for taking some responsibility for the quality of life beyond their own doorstep.

More information on YPSI-CONA call:

Bobbie Suthard -	483-4809
Vicky Glassman -	484-2195
Tom Dodd -	482-6371



All Aboard!

The Bluewater Michigan Chapter
of the

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Saturday, September 9, 1989

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Paw Paw Winery tours = \$10

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September 15-17, 1989**

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& Bay City to Mackinac Island

Birmingham = \$198

Durand = \$195

Bay City = \$188

Combination one adult/one child = \$298

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ferry, most meals, double = \$156.50

Single = \$94.50

Saturday, October 21, 1989

On Tom Edison's Trail

Birmingham & Pontiac to Port Huron

Adult = \$50

Children, 5 to 16 = \$40

Thomas Edison Inn lunches at \$15

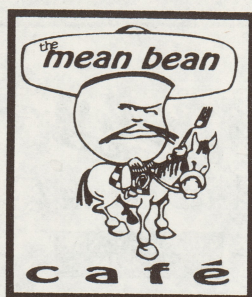
Premium Service Tickets = \$110

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Telephone (313) 272-5848 OR 399-7963
between 1:00 and 8:30 p.m. daily.

The Bluewater Michigan Chapter
Post Office Box 296

Royal Oak, Michigan 48068



Mean Bean Café's expansion continues building's long tradition

After obtaining a liquor license to accompany all those tasty and authentic Tex-Mex dishes with a Marguerita, Mean Bean Café owner, TimWise, has opened an arch through the wall separating 17 and 19 East Cross Street to expand his current table service.

Not only will this unique menu be able to serve more people, says Tim, but the additional space will also afford a stage for live entertainment. Tim, a master magician himself, will book magic, comedy and other acts for popular entertainment.

The highly visible corner property, at the base of the historic Follett House, was the first center of entertainment in the region, being described as "the grandest hotel on the Michigan Central Line" from Detroit to Chicago in the last part of the nineteenth century.

The Follett Ballroom saw such entertainers as General Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale. Buffalo Bill presented his famed Wild West Show (indoors and on the third floor!) and the Swiss Family Bell Ringers performed there, too. (See Colburn on page 2)

The archway to the new Mean Bean dining room will pierce the wall at the very spot which held the safe for what was called "the safest bank in the Michigan Territory." When Benjamin Follett and his associates opened their bank in opposition to the 'wildcat' banks proliferating throughout the territory, they probably worried about someone tunneling through that same wall. Little did they suspect that that person might be carrying a wet burrito with salsa.

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The View from The Old Caboose:

Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

Every one of the last eleven Heritage Festivals has caused regular Depot Towners to reflect on how being Disney World for just three days a year helps many new folks to find that the old ways are still good ways and resolve to return to the homey charms of older commercial/residential districts for more of their daily, year-long sustenance.

This year's gigantic attraction is hardly over and local hosts and volunteers are already plotting what to do next year. Some, no doubt, will leave town for the week and return only when all the *turista* have left. Others are sizing up the crowd and wondering what's going to be the next focus.

Every year is different and this year proved to still be a success without the Wallendas, without a circus on Frog Island and without the Jazz Competition going on down in Depot Town.

Next year's Fest will be even more a departure, since the world is no longer coming down to see that charming, old run-down railroad district. Depot Town has taken advantage of the last decade of historic revelry in its environs and has cleaned up and profited immensely from the experience.

Some new attributes of this old district:

- Realtors all around the city now brag in their housing ads about being "in Depot

Town," although there are really only nine detached houses in the actual district.

- Businesses don't just go out of business down here any more. They sell the business at great profit, even though the price may not include the property.

- Other neighborhood groups are aligning with Depot Town organizations to find techniques that can help them control the 'quality of life' within their own boundaries.

- Tour busses are making regular stops here on the way to other destinations. Some even stop off at the Pizza Farm on their way to Depot Town!

- Parking is at a premium in the district, and so many local events are staged here, that a district-wide calendar seems necessary just to guarantee space for the participants.

Depot Town has entered a new phase in its development that must not be taken for granted. We'll still have the occasional shopkeeper who seems to get by on the good will, volunteerism and advertising of others, but they were here before, too, and they'll probably be here after we're all gone.

Meanwhile, don't think any of our success happened by accident. The good old days are here again because our loyal clientele demanded it.



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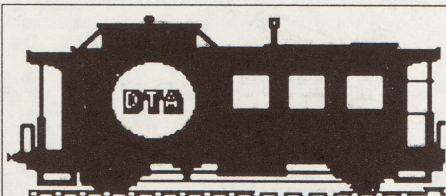
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38 East Cross Street

**Aubree's
Saloon
& Second Floor**
39 East Cross Street
Page 3 DTA, September 1989



New or renewing

DTA members this month:

Mary Ann McDonald Peter J. Murdock
Bonni & Ed Fine Virgil & Lorna Dodd

D.T.A. 20 July 1989

Vice president, Paul Fetters, chaired the meeting in Jacob Guter's absence. No minutes from June, no treasurer's report.

Insurance company will deal on short-fall. Caboose liability and property coverage bill are due from Finn's.

Sales taxes are due from last year's events, according to Michigan Department of Treasury Sales Tax communication for Feb., Mar., Country, and Heritage events. The treasurer will calculate the amount for the August meeting.

Frog Island Jazz 'did well,' sez C. McKeever with a 'healthy' split between DTA and WEMU.

Caboose electric is still in City's name. Contact Detroit Edison after Heritage Fest.

VCB's Mary Kerr presented two tour packages through the district:

1. Two vans from noon - 1 pm, August 7.
2. More than 100 people on busses on August 8 from 7:30 - 10 pm

In addition, Michigan Art Teachers will be coming from the Radisson for a 'pub crawl' on Friday, November 17th.

1989 Directory is out, with 30 sponsors.

Three Drum Corps will rehearse in East Cross Street at noon, 28 July.

NIFTY reports a 7% growth in Michigan tourism, mostly due to Depot Town.

Farm Wagon restoration plans are complete, thanks to Carrol Osborn.

YPSI-CONA invites DTA to a 'spoiling party' after the meeting to deter downtown prostitution.

Heritage Fest beer tent liability will be shared by DTA and CBC. Beer handlers' meeting is August 3rd at City Hall.

A nominating committee must be appointed at the August DTA meeting in preparation for the September election.

The Golden Goose Award goes to those who have vandalized the new benches and to whomever was supposed to cut the lawn at the depot. The City mowed it and sent a big bill!

Best Yet Award to the thirty merchants who produced the new district directory!

Adjourned with great dispatch!
Page 4 DTA, September 1989

Get on board!

Depot Town's still taking on more passengers!

There is still room for more creative personalities in the year 'round activity in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town. Whether you plan to finally open that charming little shop you've always dreamed about or are willing to tackle a complete four-story remodeling job, there's still plenty of work to be done down in the old railroad district.

And you won't be alone in the process. Five different neighborhood groups can help you get your teeth into a project:

- **The Depot Town Association, Inc.**, is the parent group to most of the activity with projects such as general promotion, jazz events, a regular monthly publication and special events to highlight the historic character of the district.

- **The Historic Depot Town Foundation** takes a long-range view of property owners' concerns and works toward solutions to problems in both the public and private sectors of the neighborhood.

- **The Merchants Committee** operates in an ad hoc fashion on projects such as the annual Victorian Holiday which complements Riverside Park's Festival of Lights from Thanksgiving through New Year's. They also mount group ad campaigns highlighting specials during the year.

- **The Antique Engine Club** maintains a collection of some of the best machines of the Industrial Revolution and constantly reminds us that 'historic preservation' isn't just old houses.

- **The Depot Town Engineering Society** includes most of the kids on the block who perform public and private chores for either love or money. They've proven to be the district's most active service club. This group always welcomes young 'engineers' as well as older 'conductors.' It's a great way for the next generation to learn the dynamics of living in a real neighborhood.

All these groups operate out of **The Old Caboose** on the Market Plaza and are open to anyone who shows an interest. Show up on any of the posted meeting times, and you'll be part of the 'old gang' in an instant.

DTA Annual Election:

7:30 pm, Thursday,
21 September 1989

in The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place,
President, Vice President,
Secretary, Treasurer

September 1989

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Foundation

8 p.m. Thursday, 9/7/89

in The Old Caboose

Development Authority (DDA)

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 9/14/89

Freighthouse Coffee Shop

Merchants

5:15 p.m. Thursday, 9/21/89

at the Old Town Restaurant

Association, annual election

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 9/21/89

in The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club

7:00 p.m. Thursday 9/28/89

in the Freighthouse Coffee Shop



THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

Depot Town Association, Inc.

Jacob Guter, president
c/o The Old Caboose

400 Market Place

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Active Memberships:

- Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce
- Washtenaw Council for the Arts
- Neighborhood Associations of Michigan

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Heritage Fest 2020: in which we visit a popular Depot World theme park franchise

As we disembarked from the cleverly remodeled hovercraft at the ancient depot, we were whisked back to those antique days when trains actually touched the ground. The vehicle which had sped us from our condo-cabin in the north country had been decorated to look like an earth-bound passenger train of another age and costumed robots pretended to take our tickets and engage us in antiquated conversations replete with 'pleases' and 'thank-yous.' Special sound effects replicated the sound of steel wheels grinding against steel rails and shrill whistles replaced the comfortable monotone of voice activated commands in our implanted intercoms.

We had arrived in Historic Old Town, which the brochure had touted as HOT: The hottest new attraction of the newest of the multi-million dollar theme parks which recall the good old days of local history.

There was a day when such a theme was an annual festival with local groups erecting booths in the streets and holding bake sales, taffy pulls and track-walking contests, but, in the modern theme park, all is automated and controlled for minimum involvement and maximum profit on a full-time basis.

The quaint street scene before us had been constructed in such a manner as to draw the visitors down a quaint avenue of shops with windows laden with colorful hand-made objects of great variety. The food emporiums were unique in that they were not at all standardized in menu or design format. In all, the entire display gave little hint that it was planned by the Central Committee in charge of folkloric profits.

We continued our historical tour with such

Good News

Thirty Depot Town enterprises put together a red, black and white brochure for distribution through both the Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor Visitors and Convention Bureaus. Touting, "30 exciting shops and a few dull ones," the flier hit the tourist stands this month and is available on the countertops of all the sponsoring businesses.



Ike's Depot Barbershop

40 East Cross

strange thoughts when the monitor suggested it was time to ingest historically accurate ethnic foods. Hot dogs, kielbasa or a pita sandwich? Choose your pill and hold it under your nostrils for six seconds before swallowing.

Ick! Can you imagine a day when food had all those terrible smells with it? And you had to chew it, too! Yuck! How could they stand it in the old days?

The next exhibit showed manikins dressed in old style garb, pretending to be the local theatre group singing, "It's a Dumb World, After All," and the audience howled at the insanity of real people speaking lines when machines could do it so much better. Some of the programmed mistakes were so embarrassing, you wonder why anyone ever tried to do it live.

Our favorite exhibit was the one where they projected historical costumes onto you and made a digitized photo on a large T-shirt. If you didn't look closely, you would swear the people were wearing several different artifacts at the same time. Some of them clashed terribly with the regional uniforms, but that made it all the more laughable.

All of the Big Name Acts were carefully projected onto the wall of an old hotel and it was almost as if they had just come into town on a wagon or in a bus to give their performances. No one applauded, of course, since we knew it was not real, but a funny feeling came over us when the show was over. It was time to leave the park and we almost felt that we should thank somebody for the good time we had. Isn't it funny, how that old fashioned stuff can seem so real, sometimes? We almost fell for it.



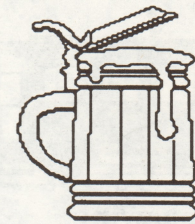
Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
in historic Depot Town

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DTA & CBC share in-tent!

For this first time since a casino fund-raiser many years ago in the Freighthouse, downtowners and Depot Towners are working together on a joint project -- the operation of the refreshment (beer, wine and soft drinks) tent in Riverside Park for the 1989 Heritage Festival. The Central Business Community (CBC) traditionally operates the Millionaire's Party which offers blackjack, craps and roulette with a small bar attached.

DTA, until this year, ran a separate concession to support the costs of the Heritage Jazz Competition, but, when Festival policymakers nixed that plan, the two commercial district associations merged their formats to operate two bars out of one license and insurance package.

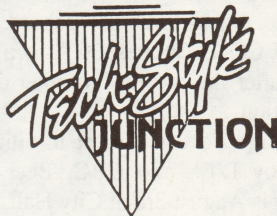
DTA's side of the bar has been meeting the needs of those who attended Friday's B.J. Thomas concerts and Saturday's appearance of the Artie Shaw Orchestra.

Both organizations extend thanks to the many who volunteered to staff these events.

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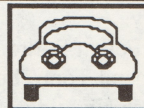
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